

St. Johnsbury Caledonian.

St. Johnsbury, Vt., Friday, May 13, 1881.

Religious Reading.

"If."

If, sitting with this little, weariest soul,
And starlit sleeking lying on my knee,
I knew the little feet had pattered through
The pented gates that lie 'twixt heaven and me.
I could be reconciled and happy, too,
And look with glad eyes toward the Jasper Sea.

If, in the morning, when the song of birds
Reminds me of a noise more sweet,
I listen for his pretty, broken words,
And for the music of his dimpled feet,
I could be almost happy, though I heard
So answer, and but saw his vacant seat.

I could be glad, if, when the day is done,
All its cares and heart-aches laid low,
I could look westward to the hidden sun,
And, with a heart full of soft yearning say,
"Tidings! I'm near you!"
My last the track of a single day."

If I could find, when little feet were shot
In blinding wreaths of light in better lands,
And that the footprints of a tender God
Had side by side with his, in golden sands,
I could how cheerfully and kiss the red
Stones Penny was in, safer, softer hands.

If he were dead, I would not sit to-day,
And stain with tears the seat weok on my knee,
I would not kiss the tiny shoe, and say,
"Bring back again my little boy to me!"
I would be patient, knowing 'twas God's way,
And wait to meet him over death's silent seat.

But O! to know the feet, once pure and white,
The hands that should have bathed for the right,
The hands that should have bathed for the left!
How been wrong crimson in the clasp of sin!
The hands that should have bathed for the right,
I fear my boy could hardly enter in.

—Orion at Work.

The Discipline of Failure.

Do you remember how hard it was in the days of your childhood to be contented under the shadow of some great disappointment? You had set your heart strongly on some anticipated pleasure, and it was far more bitter to than any grown person expected, to put aside the pure and fine linen of that fair hope, and assume the everyday raiment of the comfortable and common place. We learn as we go on in life to conceal our feelings of pain even when most acute, and to wear smiles when tents are near the eyes, that we may shed no clouds on others' sunshine; but perhaps we never learn to accept trial and care as we ought until we are in the British land, which is on the border of the heavenly rest. Thinking of this matter of the discipline of failure, I am persuaded that there are few who do not experience it, and few therefore who do not require it, for God gives us individually and daily that which is best for our growth in grace. The strange part of it is, however, that sometimes our failures are, as it were, manifested in the commonest of ways, and the deepest of woes. In the sentence, and are not offend and most conspicuously in the very places where we have always supposed ourselves to be strongest. You are a Sunday school teacher. Yours is the service of almost half a lifetime. You love the work, and you attend faithfully to its responsibilities according to your light. As for preparation of the lesson, for personal influence with the scholar, for secret prayer, conscience accepts you of neglect in any of these particulars. But the one thing you long for most earnestly is delayed. Your scholars admire you, love you, emulate you in certain ways, but still the desire to excel is strong. And the sooner of good seed, and that till the Spirit moves on the youthful hearts, you must wait for their conversion. You are very likely to grow weary and depressed, and not to accept in the right frame of mind this discipline of failure in what most you desire.

The failure may be of a more mortifying nature than this more humiliating, that is, to a very natural pride and sense of self-respect. There is a bright, pretty girl, whom you have specially liked for some captivating qualities or solid excellencies of character. You try to win her confidence. You do so, and she is won. You both enjoyed, grieved to find yourself exalted, and surprised at your lack of attraction for a person who has so many and decided attractions for you. After a while your pupil leaves you for some other class, and there she thrives and blossoms like a flower transplanted from a chaff to a kindlier atmosphere. It may be that the case is still more pronounced, as a failure on your part, for your scholar may leave your school altogether, in these days of irresponsible parents, and some day you meet her and she tells you how congenial it is at St. Elmo's, and how happy she has been established there. Failures of this sort are very common. Are we to grow used to them, to regard them as among the inseparable evils of city life, to mourn over them as showing some flaw or defect in ourselves; or to look upon them as part of our own training in patience and faith? Probably the last. Perhaps, when we know how hard it is to make such events sweetly, prayerfully, and with sincere gladness that the Master's work is being done, although by other hands than ours, we become convinced that we are still far from being fully sanctified. All this uplifting of soul when instead we should elevate the Cross; this earthly consolation, this earthly comfort, we should want more than all else; these are sometimes a revelation indeed to our hearts, of their sinfulness and darkness.

The discipline of failure may come to you in other ways. You are an artist. For years you have striven to do some good work, seeing ever before you some beautiful ideal. You toil early and late. You neglect nothing. You are severe in your self-criticism, sparing in self-estimate and rigid in following the truth. But "Madonna eyes look on you in the air, but never from the picture," and to-day your artist's skill is marred, and your soul is losing its enthusiasm, some bid with a lad's light, delirious ways and lad's fresh enthusiasm, does without seeming effort what you have never done with all your care. How many have known this bitterness which comes to the poet, the author and the scholar, as well as to the painter and sculptor. Shall you be jealous? Shall you deride the merits of that which all are praising? Shall you stoop to meanness and refuse to discern the promise of genius and its quick fulfillments? Not so! if failure, coming after honest labor, have wrought in you its divine beauty so that you are more than the world can tell.

Failure reaches you in other ways, and subtler and fiercer are the soul issues it sometimes touches. You have a friend, dearly loved and closely grieved in your heart. Your friend fails you, perhaps says unkind things of you. Well says the wise man that a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city. Shall you be downcast because a human being, seeing partially, knowing little of the springs which animate conduct and easily entertaining prejudices, has acted without fidelity and entertained malice and spite, instead of love and forbearance? Whenever you are, public teacher or private citizen, clothed upon with off-

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